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REMARKS OF WILLIAM J. CASEY

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

before

VETERANS OF OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES (VSS)

Washington Hilton Hotel

Washington, D. C.

Tuesday, 24 May 1983



B301

Mr. Vice President, Ambassador Helms, other distinguished guests, all of you:

I would like to read to you a letter given me to bring to our Honoree this evening.

Read letter attached

The President's accolade to the Veterans of OSS as heroes recalls how, some fifteen years after the liberation of France, the Amicale Action, the veterans organization of the French resistance, provided a tour through France for some twenty of us who had worked to support them during the war. Everywhere we went there would be a speech and a toast and I was expected to respond. I would dust off my college French and start with "nous sommes tres heureux etre ici," thinking I was saying "we are very happy to be here." After I'd done this a few times some French scholar, Henry Hyde or Barbara Shaheen, I forget exactly who, came to me and said, "Bill, you are saying "nous sommes tous eroes," which means, "we are all heroes." Whatever it was I was saying, I had noticed a look of great skepticism on the faces of our French hosts. And it is reassuring, even at this late date, to have the President of the United States confirm that you really are heroes, even if I was trying to say something else.

But I am certainly very happy to be here with so many friends and comrades of old wars and escapades and particularly to join in this splendid tribute to Dick Helms. Dick and I were present at the creation, worked together in Washington, shared an apartment in London, and I have watched him quite closely over the last forty years always admiring his qualities of

character and intellect, his judgment, his discipline and his professionalism. I once told Dick how wonderful it was that he, unlike the great majority of us, had resisted the blandishments of the private sector and dedicated his career to the creation of a permanent American intelligence service. He explained simply that when you sit in the CIA and see the reports that come in from around the world you can't help but realize how beleaguered this country really is and you just have to stick with it.

Certainly our country is no less beleaguered today and we are very lucky to have a very large number of men and women who show that same dedication and have developed a discipline, a know how and a can-do spirit which is both a joy to behold and a priceless national asset. That is a heritage for which all of us owe much to the leadership and example which Dick Helms provided for some thirty years and, even in his post intelligence career, still does.

There came a time in 1974 and 1975 when some of the Congress and the media indulged in an orgy of allegation and recrimination against the American intelligence community, most of it unfounded or wildly exaggerated. It was bruising experience which scattered painfully won expertise and experience, shattered morale and destroyed confidence. Then in 1976, there came, as DCI, a man who in a remarkable short period of time restored the confidence, lifted the spirits and renewed the momentum of the American intelligence community. For that achievement, and for the qualities of character and leadership on which it was based, he has won the admiration and the affection of all of us. I am honored to present him to you tonight.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Vice President of the United States.

May 18, 1983

Dear Dick,

It was with great pleasure that I learned the Veterans of OSS are presenting you with their William J. Donovan Award. I can think of few more deserving recipients, indeed few careers in government have been more distinguished than yours or more exciting. History seems to have singled you out for a role in some of the most critical events of our century. As a journalist, you saw the Third Reich firsthand, as a Navy officer during World War II you served ably in OSS; as a civil servant, you played a role in the founding and direction of the Central Intelligence Agency from its earliest days; as a Director of Central Intelligence, you won national regard for your leadership; as a diplomat, you served with distinction as ambassador to Iran.

All of your countrymen are indebted to you for these years you have given to America -- for your unflinching patriotism, your high standards of professionalism and your commitment to the call of conscience.

Today I join the Veterans of the OSS -- heroes all of them -- in saluting one of their number. Congratulations, Dick, on the Donovan award and many thanks for your long years of service to the cause of human freedom.

Sincerely,

